

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6067

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PO

SUBJ: LABOR DEVELOPMENTS

REF: LISBON 5882 DTG 061426Z OCT 75

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING SET-BACKS IN A NUMBER OF OTHER UNION ELECTIONS,
A PRO-INTERSINDICAL COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP RETAINED CONTROL OF THE
IMPORTANT METAL WORKERS FEDERATION. THIS DEVELOPMENT AND THE WEAK
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POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATED BY THE NEWLY ELECTED LEADERSHIP OF THE

CLERICAL WORKERS UNION, SUGGEST URGENT NEED FOR TRAINING
OF DEMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERS. END SUMMARY.

1. METAL WORKERS FEDERATION ELECTIONS: PRO-COMMUNIST SLATES HAVE WON UNION ELECTIONS IN BOTH LISBON AND OPORTO, THUS RETAINING THE SUPPORT OF PORTUGAL'S SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT BLUE COLLAR FEDERATION FOR INTERSINDICAL. THE ELECTIONS WERE CHARACTERIZED BY LOW PARTICIPATION. OF 60,000 WORKERS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN THE LISBON AREA, ONLY 11,000 WENT TO THE POLLS. IN THE OPORTO ELECTIONS ONLY 8,000 WORKERS WERE DOCUMENTED TO VOTE--AND ONLY 2,000 VOTED--OUT OF SOME 40,000 POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE.

2. ASIDE FROM THE LOW TURNOUT, PARTIALLY DUE TO MANIPULATION BY THE INCUMBENT LEADERSHIP, THE ELECTIONS DEMONSTRATED THAT COMMUNIST PARTY RETAINS SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH AMONG MANUAL WORKERS. IN OPORTO THE SOCIALISTS AND THE MAOIST MRPP FORMED A FACIT COALITION WHICH DEW ONLY 21 PERCENT OF THE LIMITED VOTE. IN THE LISBON ELECTIONS, THE SOCIALIST SLATE DREW 25 PERCENT AND MRPP SLATE 7 PERCENT. THE FAILURE OF THE TWO FACTIONS TO AGREE UPON A COMMON SLATE HURT THIER CHANGES.

3. AGRICULTURAL WORKERS THREATEN STRIKE: REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SOUTHERN (ALENTEJO) AGRICULTURAL WORKERS UNION AND THE LISBON AREA METAL WORKERS UNION MET OCTOBER 12 TO DEMAND IMMEDIATE AGRICULTURAL CREDIT FOR FARMS OCCUPIED BY WORKERS AND NATIONALIZED UNDER AGRARIAN REFORM. THE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS CLAIMED THAT 160 MILLION DOLLARS IN AGRICULTURAL CREDIT AUTHORIZED BY THE FIFTH GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN EXPENDED. THE METAL WORKERS PROTESTED THAT QUANTITIES OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY, NEEDED BY THE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, IS SITTING UNSOLD AND IDLE. THE TWO UNIONS THREATENED TO PARALYZE SOUTHERN PORTUGAL IF THE SIXTH GOVERNMENT DOES NOT REMEDY THE SITUATION.

4. WITH MANY LARGE, PRIVATELY OWNED FARMS OCCUPIED BY THE WORKERS, AGRICULTURAL CREDIT FACILITIES ARE PROVING UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE FUNDS NEEDED BY THE WORKERS FOR SEED, FERTILIZERS, AND CAPITAL REQUIRED FOR THE FALL PLANTING.

5. MINISTER OF LABOR CRITICIZED: CHARGES AND COUNTER-CHARGES CONTINUE BETWEEN MINISTER OF LABOR TOMAS ROSA AND THE PCP-
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CONTROLLED UNIONS. INTERSINDICAL PUBLICLY QUESTIONED THE PURPOSE OF THE MINISTRY'S NEWLY CREATED OFFICE OF TRADE UNION ASSISTANCE, ALLEGING THAT IT WILL BE A FRONT FOR ENCOURAGING OPPOSITION UNIONS. FOR HIS PART THE MINISTER HAS FILED LEGAL ACTIONS AGAINST THE METAL WORKERS FEDERATION CHARGING THAT IT PUBLISHED MALICIOUS STATMENTS DURING ITS OCTOBER 7 DEMONSTRATIONS.

6. BEFORE TAKING OFFICE TOMAS ROSA INDICATED THAT HE INTENDED TO

PROCEED STEP BY STEP TO REMOVE COMMUNISTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND IN HIS DEALINGS WITH THE UNIONS. INSTEAD HE HAS BEEN FORCED EARLY INTO THE FRAY, ON ONE HAND REPLACING OR DEMOTING PCP MEMBERS IN THE MINISTRY AND ON THE OTHER DEALING WITH A DIRECT CHALLENGE FROM THE METAL WORKERS FEDERATION.

7. CLERICAL WORKERS UNION REJOINS INTERSINDICAL: FOLLOWING A HECTIC ALL-NIGHT PLENARY SESSION, THE NEWLY ELECTED LEADERSHIP OF THE LISBON CLERICAL WORKERS UNION WAS OVER-RIDDEN BY A VOCIFEROUS GROUP OF MILITANTS WHO REVERSED THE UNION'S EARLIER DECISION AND VOTED TO REJOIN INTERSINDICAL. THE CLERICAL WORKERS LEADERSHIP, COMPOSED OF A SOCIALIST/MRPP COALITION, HAS BEEN INEFFECTUAL DUE TO INEXPERIENCE AND DIFFERENCES OVER POLICIES.

8. COMMENT: IN THE IMPORTANT METAL WORKERS ELECTION, ORGANIZATION AND RENEWED MILITANCY PAID OFF IN KEEPING THE METAL WORKERS IN THE INTERSINDICAL FOLD. USING THE CLASSIC TACTIC OF A DETERMINED MINORITY, THE PRO-INTERINDICAL FACTION OF THE CLERICAL WORKERS WAS ABLE TO OUTLAST THE NON-COMMUNISTS. THE RESULTS OF THE METAL WORKERS AND CLERICAL UNION ELECTIONS POINT UP THE SKILL AND DETERMINATION OF THE PRO-COMMUNIST ELEMENTS IN PORTUGAL'S LABOR MOVEMENT. THE INSTANT CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE NEW ANTI-COMMUNIST LABOR MINISTER IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE AGGRESSIVE LABOR POLICY OF THE PCP AND ITS ALLIES.

9. THE SETBACK IN THE METAL WORKERS AND CLERICAL WORKERS UNIONS ARE STRIKING EXAMPLES OF THE NEED DESCRIBED BY LOCAL ICFTU REP MANULE SIMON (REFTEL) FOR TRAINING OF UNION LEADERS. CARLUCCI

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